

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of producing a fine metal powder, characterized by comprising the steps of:

subjecting a solution containing tetravalent titanium ions ~~[[and]]~~ having a pH of not more than 7 to cathode electrolytic treatment to reduce parts of the tetravalent titanium ions to trivalent titanium ions, to obtain a reducing agent solution containing both the trivalent titanium ions and the tetravalent titanium ions at a predetermined existing ratio; and

adding a water-soluble compound of at least one type of metal element forming the fine metal powder to the reducing agent solution, followed by mixing, to reduce and deposit ions of the metal element by the reducing action at the time of oxidation of the trivalent titanium ions to the tetravalent titanium ions to grow the fine metal powder, and at the same time, to restrain the growth of the fine metal powder by the tetravalent titanium ions, thereby ~~[[,]]~~ to obtain ~~[[the]]~~ a fine metal powder having a particle diameter corresponding to the existing ratio of the trivalent titanium ions and the tetravalent titanium ions.

2. (Original) The method of producing a fine metal powder according to claim 1, characterized in that as the solution containing the tetravalent titanium ions forming the reducing agent solution, a solution containing chlorine ions having a molar ratio which is not less than four times that of the tetravalent titanium ions is used.

3. (Original) The method of producing a fine metal powder according to claim 2, characterized in that a hydrochloric acid solution of titanium tetrachloride is used as the solution

containing the tetravalent titanium ions.

4. (Original) The method of producing a fine metal powder according to claim 1, characterized in that at least one type selected from a group consisting of Ag, Au, Bi, Co, Cu, Fe, In, Ir, Mn, Mo, Ni, Pb, Pd, Pt, Re, Rh, Sn and Zn is used as the metal element forming the fine metal powder.

5. (Original) The method of producing a fine metal powder according to claim 1, characterized in that fine metal powders having an average particle diameter of not more than 400 nm are produced.

6. (Original) The method of producing a fine metal powder according to claim 1, characterized in that the solution containing the tetravalent titanium ions after the deposition of the fine metal powder is reproduced as the reducing agent solution by the cathode electrolytic treatment, and is repeatedly used for producing the fine metal powder.